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## AN AUSTRIAN APPRECIATION OF LESTER F. WARD<sup>1</sup>

### I

When one has outgrown the theological conception of history, and has also thrown overboard the rationalistic conception; when one recognizes neither God nor man as "maker" of history, and has become a convert to "nature;" when one has become with Haeckel a pure monist, and thereupon swears that the "one law of nature" causes the planets to swing in their orbits and states to rise and fall; two shadings of this view still remain possible. The one naturalistic monist regards the "historical process" as remaining eternally the same, since "natural processes never change their character;" the other, in spite of all naturalism and monism, regards man also as a "natural force;" and since he thinks he knows from experience that one may alter this natural force by education and culture, he is of the opinion that, along with the present development of mankind, which is too evident to be denied, with the spiritual improvement of men, the time may also come when the natural process of history must undergo change, and a distant future will bring us social arrangements which have somewhat the same relation to those of today that the telegraphic news service of our time has to the method of transmitting messages by couriers in the old Persian empire. We are accustomed to call the adherents of the former view pessimists; those of the latter, optimists. The terminology is misleading, because it is ambiguous. When we speak of "pessimists," we think of morose growlers who are always cursing and never satisfied; while we mean by "optimists" people who are content with themselves and the world. This association of ideas is far from exact. On the contrary, the facts are precisely the reverse. The pessimist in world-philosophy is usually an optimist in life. The troublous course of the world does not surprise him, he expects nothing better; he knows that the world is evil, that it cannot be otherwise. Thus he has no ground whatever for being unsatisfied with life; it is as it always was, and always will be. He enjoys *des Lebens Unverstand* as a comedy of nature. The

<sup>1</sup> The original of this paper appeared in *Die Zeit*, Vienna, August 20, 1904. Its obvious interest for American sociologists justifies departure from our rule not to publish articles that have appeared elsewhere.

case is different with the optimist in world-philosophy. Convinced that things may be better if man will only better himself, he stumbles against rude disappointments at every step, and he is constantly complaining that men, and with them life itself, is ever failing to make improvement. In eternal expectation of better times, he experiences constantly new disappointments and falls from one despair into another. The optimist in world-philosophy usually presents to us in life the picture called up by the word "pessimist."

Let us hold, however, to the distinction we have made between shadings of our conception of the world, and to the significance appropriate to the words "pessimist" and "optimist" in this connection. With that proviso we find that usually the members of the propertied classes are pessimists; they say there have always been rich and poor, and we cannot change the situation. That is the order of the world. Gluttons and starvelings have always existed side by side, and we cannot prevent it. States maintain this inequality and even protect it. This is "the order of nature." The non-propertied and their advocates are the optimists. They say: "These things ought not so to be; we will change all this; the traditional state is badly organized; it must be improved. Everyone must and shall have his own chicken in the pot. Let us only do our part; we shall soon have things righted. Long live the state of the future!"

I was always of the opinion that these optimists in world-philosophy are never genuine scientists, and that they are naïve enough to believe that they can change a natural process; that is, the social process; which, in fact, proceeds according to "eternal iron laws" as truly as the stars in their courses. For that reason it has happened that socialists have called me not merely a pessimist, but, more than that, a cynic, because I gave free expression to my opinion and justified it. Now, however, I have experienced something worse. One day last summer there appeared before me a natural scientist of genuineness and merit, who is at the same time the greatest sociologist in America. He explained to me most persistently that I was wrong, and that the social nature-process may one day, with the help of the human intellect, which is itself "also a natural force," if this intellect works in the appropriate direction, enter upon a course—indeed, already has entered upon it—in which we may arrive at a "social integration" that may bring all men to equal happiness and welfare. The stranger who explained all this to me with youthful ardor was a tall, slim gentleman, no longer young, with smoothly

shaven upper lip and chin after the English fashion ; his flowing side beard, although gray like his hair, had evidently in earlier years been blond, as the light-blue eyes also testified ; in a word, the Germanic type, which would please Chamberlain and Ludwig Woltmann. As it is, they will one day be proud of him, if they only make his acquaintance. It was Mr. Lester Frank Ward, announced as chief of a government geological bureau in Washington. He had come as a delegate appointed by the American government to the geological congress in Vienna, and had not hesitated to make the excursion to Graz in order to acquaint a European colleague in the field of sociology with his ideas. Now, I was already acquainted with Ward's works ; I had already been led by his letters to personal appreciation of him ; that he would succeed, however, in fiery debate, if not in converting, still in silencing me, I never should have believed ; and yet that is what happened.

When I read, years ago, in his *Dynamic Sociology* (second edition, 1897) that applied sociology is still in its swaddling-clothes, and that it must first pass through all those phases of development, those processes of improvement by inventions and discoveries, which the natural sciences have already accomplished, before it would be able in a similar way to achieve those social conditions which would be parallel with technological achievements, and which would assure to all the people on the earth the highest possible prosperity, I laid the book aside with a skeptical shrug of the shoulders. "Another idealist," I thought, "who confounds two things, science and art. Man can make and unmake many things, but he cannot make himself other than he is. We must be satisfied with understanding humanity, as we learn to understand the course of the planets, without demanding to change it. Not everything can be the subject-matter of an applied science, an art, and a technique. Among the objects to which this disqualification applies is humanity." That was my view, and I have always regarded all humanity-tinkerers as utopians beyond the pale of science. At all events, none of them had ever been able to show sufficient scientific grounds for changing my view. Ward's *Dynamic Sociology* (which bears the subtitle *Applied Social Science*) among the rest failed also, whenever I took it in my hand, to convince me. I was shaken a little, to be sure, by its bold propositions : "We live in the stone age of political science," and, "In politics we are still savages." I was still further disturbed by the confidence with which he indicated the steps through which humanity, gradually advancing

to completer stages of development, might arrive at a civic science which should compare with that of today as a modern machine gun with a primitive sling. As I have said, this audacity made me a little uneasy; it threatened to overthrow my whole previous view of the world, in accordance with which the social process remains essentially the same, like every other natural process, since human nature from the first days of known history has not appreciably changed, and the masses likewise, so far as history reaches, have not changed their nature. "Alas!" I thought, "my good friend in Washington is a very brainy fellow, but he is a paragon of an optimist. There is no help for him." Very likely my skepticism, perhaps a sort of indifference toward the bold flight of his sociological phantasy, which betrayed itself in my letters to him, prompted the man to search out in his nest this hopeless European "pessimist," in order to bring him more healthy ideas; for, as he repeats over and over again, he recognizes no higher or more dignified task for a man than to publish his ideas as widely as possible. In a word, one day I welcomed him in Graz, and at once the hot fight began. To confess the truth at once, before I was aware, he had stormed my principal pessimistic position, and as I took leave of him at the station late in the evening, after a half-day's debate, I had the feeling that I had made the acquaintance of an intellectual giant of a type that I had never before met in reality. Since that time I am studying his works with quite other feelings from those with which I read them before. To be sure, no man can change his fundamental spiritual tone, nor can one easily get rid of a world-view which is a product of a long life. Perhaps one can never get rid of it. But I am free to confess that in place of the former feeling of confidence in my own views, perhaps of my own superiority to a "utopian," there had come a feeling of hesitation, still more a feeling of admiration for a *Menschheits-Idealismus*, of which we Europeans (with the exception of Franz Oppenheimer) are entirely incapable.

Now to the point. My most important position was: the essence of the process of nature. We were entirely agreed that social development, the history of mankind, presents such a process. Ward's conception of the essence of this natural process is more magnificent than anyone in Europe has imagined. I will present it here, not from memory, but in the words of Ward himself, as they appeared recently in an American journal, in the form of an estimate of Herbert Spencer's sociology.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> At this point the writer interpolates the whole of the article by Dr. Ward, "Herbert Spencer's Sociology," *The Independent*, March 31, 1904.

Thus by the circuitous route of the organic comparison, Ward arrives at a brilliant refutation of Spencer's individualism, and at the most roseate optimism that one can imagine. All the multiplying civic limitations of the individual, which fill the individualistic Spencer with anxiety and despair, and which cause him to foretell the "coming slavery," inspire Ward with eager hopes; for in his view all these "necessary" limitations are only the separate acts of the great collectivistic integration which has no other ultimate end than the utmost possible freedom and happiness of the individual.

He succeeds in his argument in support of this view only by being able to oppose to the schematic conception of the process of nature, according to which it proceeds always and everywhere in the same form, a profounder conception of the process, according to which the process is consistent, not in its form, but in its essence when the form is changed; and accordingly when we judge the process we must attend to its meaning and purpose, not to the ways and means by which the purpose is gained.

Ward says: "To be sure, the essence of the process of nature, the evolution, remains always the same; but we must seek this essence in the purpose toward which the process is tending, not in the form. If we criticise the process of nature, i. e., evolution, from this point of view, we discover that its aim in the case of organisms and in the case of society is the same, namely, the utility of the whole, and this is its essence, which remains the same in both cases. In accordance with the variety of the things, however, in which the process is carried out, it must take various forms: the severe and relentless subordination and suppression of the parts in the case of the organism, the utmost freedom and welfare of the individual in the case of society."

After Ward had supported these arguments in a debate that lasted for hours, I had to acknowledge myself defeated. To be sure, I have never been an individualist, and I have never supported the view that the historical process depended simply and solely upon the freedom of the individual. On the other hand, I have never looked for very considerable results from any sort of collectivism. I have never given myself over to hope that collectivism could bring freedom and happiness to mankind. I have had no share in that sort of optimism. Before Ward's arguments, however, I was obliged to lay down my arms. While I was formerly of the opinion that the process of nature in its social division could bring us neither progress nor regress, but

that it always remains the same (see my *Rassenkampf*), I could not avoid recognizing the superiority of Ward's conception of nature, in accordance with which social development might lead us through a transition from the "stone age" of social science, in which we are living today "like real savages," into an industrial period of social science, in which men would look back with horror upon our present civic condition.

## II

The American rubbed his hands with pleasure. He had not made the excursion to Graz in vain. His highest satisfaction, as he constantly repeats, is "to publish his ideas."

In this case he had succeeded in bringing them home to a European sociologist whose work had already been translated into English in America. Yet he was not content with victoriously storming this one position. He had something else on his heart. He had made up his mind to assault another position which I had supposed to be safely fortified. In this case, too, the assumption was founded upon a view of the essence of the process of nature which he undertook to prove untenable. This was my "polygenesis." In my *Rassenkampf* (1883) I had proposed the hypothesis that the human race, which presents to us yet a large collection of rational types, is derived from a large number of originally heterogeneous hordes and stocks, and that from the earliest beginnings, scattered over the earth in their original abodes, they had differed from each other. I supported the hypothesis in this way: The known history of mankind shows us everywhere a development from a multiplicity of heterogeneous ethnic elements to larger aggregations of people and to great nationalities. When we remember that natural processes always occur in similar ways, we cannot assume that this process manifested in known history can have been reversed in prehistoric times; that is, we cannot assume that in earlier times the process had followed the reverse course from a homogeneous unity to an ever greater differentiation; we must rather assume that then, as since, the process was always from heterogeneous variety to a constantly decreasing number of larger aggregates. "That is impossible!" said Ward. "No natural scientist, no zoölogist, can agree with such an hypothesis. It is utterly unscientific, and for the following reasons: The human skeleton, as well as the muscular and nervous systems, presents in all the races in the world such correspondence that it leaves no room for

doubt about the unity of mankind, i. e., about derivation from the same progenitors, and about descent from one original home. There is no room for the hypothesis that nature can have hit upon one and the same complicated form two or more times. Nature has produced man only once. As to the unity of origin, and consequently as to the physiological unity of mankind, no naturalist can entertain doubts. The great variety of external forms of the *genus homo* which we discover within the human family—i. e., a variety in color, figure, height, growth of the hair, etc.—can consequently be interpreted only as a result of gradual differentiation and adaptation to the various climates and geographical conditions, in particular a result of the mode of life determined by the geographical situation.

“The theory of many ‘creative centers’—i. e., of the polygenetic origin of mankind—is long outgrown in natural science. Agassiz, whom you cite in support of your polygenesis in your *Rassenkampf*, was the last defender of a lost cause.”

I was dumfounded before this enthusiastic defender of the “unity of the human race.” I ventured only one suggestion: “How do you explain, my honored friend, the sudden reversal in the direction of the social process, which caused your single original human group to split up into innumerable branches of such different sorts, while known history shows us the picture of a gradual conglomeration of heterogeneous human groups into an amalgamation growing in size and advancing in assimilation? Has nature suddenly taken thought since we have become acquainted with human history, and has her former tendency toward differentiation and variation of humanity suddenly given place to an evident tendency toward assimilation and amalgamation? Is such an assumption compatible with the idea of a natural process, the first and essential mark of which is the element of eternal sameness and persistence in one direction?”

“There you are very greatly mistaken, my friend! You are not a geologist. If you were, as I am, you would ascribe to nature no such one-sidedness. You would know that natural processes not merely often, but always and everywhere, pass from one direction into its opposite. Just observe the geological periods. In them the natural process never occurs in a single direction. If it did, life on our earth would have long since been extinguished. Every living thing would have long ago been frozen up, if the natural process of glaciation had continued in the same direction. On the contrary,



nature in the several geological periods turned about, and after periods of freezing came periods of melting. The same is the case with the social process. Humanity is undoubtedly derived from a single birthplace and of common heredity. Thereupon followed a long period of development (measured by millions of years) in which the race spread in countless branches, which grew, under the influence of different environment and conditions of life, into the many races and varieties. In historical times, to be sure, the reverse process occurs, which you have correctly pictured in your *Rassenkampf*. The heterogeneous elements come into contact. There follows a struggle for existence as consequence of the same social integration which increasing agglomerations and assimilations bring about. In the social process, as everywhere else in nature, a long period of differentiations is followed by a period of integration. We live in the latter stage. This process of integration is nowhere near its end.”<sup>3</sup>

I was beaten. I stood there like a pupil who had just been thoroughly whipped by his teacher. “He may be right,” I thought. When I inferred, from the forms of the social process in historical times, a polygenesis of humanity, the notion never occurred to me of geologic periods with their *corsi* and *recorsi* which Vico might have suspected. I felt the superiority of the reasons cited by the geological sociologist. At all events, I have not met in Europe such a giant of a scholar, who counts the history of mankind by hundreds of thousands of million-year periods. Almost demolished, I ventured only the question: “Then you reject my whole race-struggle theory? I drew my best arguments from the hypothesis of polygenesis. Now you are dealing with me as Hercules did with Antæus. When you lift me from the soil of my hypothesis, all the force of my arguments disappears. If I cannot explain race-conflict as a phenomenon that is natural, regular, and rooted deep in the laws of the universe, must my sociological system collapse?” “By no means,” answered Ward eagerly; “the social process of human evolution, as you present it—that is, as beginning with innumerable heterogeneous hordes and progressing by means of struggle between them, and consequent assimilation, into a constantly diminishing number, or constantly

<sup>3</sup> Ward has developed this view in chap. 10 of his latest work *Pure Sociology* (1903), pp. 199 ff. On his return trip from the congress in Vienna, he also delivered an address in Paris to the same effect. It was his presidential address before L'Institut international de Sociologie, and was published in the ninth volume of the *Annales* of that society under the title “La différenciation et l'intégration sociale.”

growing agglomerations perfectly corresponds with reality. That is the social process of our present geologic period. Stick to it! This description is entirely correct for our geologic time; only do not draw any conclusions, from the character of the social process of our geologic period, with reference to the character of the process in earlier ages—especially in the direction of polygenesis. Leave that entirely out of the reckoning. However the beginnings, and the whole procedure of the development of present humanity, suggest such presumption of polygenetic origin, it is an unwarranted inference. The human race of our present geologic period sprang from the human race of earlier periods which evolved in a contrasted direction. That is, emerging from an aboriginal abode, it spread over the whole earth and divided into many races.”

I drew a long sigh of relief. I had been tried—and saved. I had the feeling of a drowning man to whom a life-line had been thrown. After all, for “our geologic period” my presentation of the process of social development was correct, only I must not give myself any liberty to draw conclusions about previous geologic periods! With the greatest alacrity I gave this promise to my relentless judge and amiable deliverer. I assured him that I made no claim to be a sociologist for many geological periods; my scientific ambition did not extend so far; I was completely satisfied with being a sociologist for “our geologic period;” to knowledge of previous eras I made no sort of claim; I even confess that I have very little interest and intelligence with reference to them. I will gladly believe everything told me about the social process of past geological periods by my learned American friend, who is so much my superior in all fields of knowledge. At the same time, I became much more respectful toward American sociology and its unquestionably most important representative, who among us in Europe is comparatively little known. Professor Barth devoted a short section to him, to be sure, in his *Philosophie der Geschichte als Sociologie* (1897), yet he knew him only from his *Dynamic Sociology*, and could not therefore pass an adequate judgment, since Ward did not publish his most important works until later. They are: *The Psychic Factors of Civilization* (1897), *Outlines of Sociology* (1898), and his chief work, *Pure Sociology* (1903). Up to the present time only a single brief monograph of Ward has been translated into German, namely *Contemporary Sociology* (*Sociologie von Heute*), Innsbruck, 1904. In this monograph the author presents a survey of the present condition of

sociology. It is unusually instructive, since the author subjects all branches of sociology, which have developed so luxuriantly in all directions, to a severely objective critical estimate, in which not merely his precise and temperate judgment with reference to present sociology appears, but his own standpoint is brought to light with the utmost clearness.

The monograph might have been entitled *The Triumph of Sociology*, for Ward shows how all the various traditional moral and political sciences, which have thus far developed independently, are really in the air, because they lack the firm foundation of sociology. To be sure, sociology did not come into existence as science until it made itself an integration or synthesis of the whole body of the social sciences. Now that it is in existence, the social sciences that developed earlier cannot function normally and rationally without its regulating support; they must receive their guiding principles from sociology. Ward shows this in brilliant fashion in his *Contemporary Sociology*. The monograph is the more significant since it is less a program for a science that is still to be hoped for, than a résumé by a sociologist who, standing at the summit of his own achievements, casts a retrospective view over the route which he has traversed. Ward really shows what he himself has accomplished for sociology, for, in fact, when we review his numerous sociological works, we see that he has explored all these fields of possible or real social science. It is thus only a species of report upon his own method of work, when he says, in *Contemporary Sociology*, with reference to biology, anthropology, and psychology: "Sociology is not exactly a structure built of these materials. It is rather a generalization from them all. It abstracts from each all that is common, and forms a sort of head, to which they constitute, as it were, the body and limbs. In short, sociology is an integration or synthesis of the whole body of social sciences."<sup>4</sup>

This definition of sociology applies pre-eminently to Ward's latest work, *Pure Sociology*. An "applied" sociology is announced to follow this "pure" sociology in a short time. It should be awaited with interest, for the practical American crops out in Ward, in the fact that he cannot think of a science, even the most abstract, without application. Ward is not willing to entertain the idea of a "pure" science as an end in itself. His *Applied Sociology* will accordingly show us how we are to emerge from the "stone age" of political science, and how we are to cease being "savages." The genius that

<sup>4</sup> *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. VII, p. 635.

he has shown in his previous work warrants great expectations of this crown of his scientific achievements. At all events, the pessimists in world-philosophy, who are of the opinion that nothing essential can be changed in the social process, are in danger of a serious reverse. The optimists, on the other hand, of the Franz Oppenheimer type, may congratulate themselves. In Lester F. Ward they have from America a powerful reinforcement.

LUDWIG GUMFLOWICZ.

GRAZ.